

TRUST AND CONSISTENCY

A TRUSTWORTHY SAYING

Consistency provides the stage on which trust loves to dance. Inconsistency, however introduces an uneven floor on which every step may be your last. Too many leaders change direction, switch emphasis, or are seduced by the latest and greatest, wiz-bang, next-best-thing opportunity. Unpredictability creates a dangerous dance floor that never allows for corporate momentum, freedom or grace.

Consistency applies to our character and competency. When we behave consistently with the values we espouse over a long period of time, trust grows. And the longer we demonstrate mastery of life skills and professional competency, the more leaders are seen as trustworthy.

But consistency applies to implementation as well. New programs and strategies, new products and structures – they are all important and all necessary. But when a leader is known for starting and not finishing, trust erodes. The good will and enthusiasm that attend to new beginnings is lost when Plan A is jettisoned for Plan B with no apparent reason other than new is more interesting and more engaging than old.

Staying on course takes discipline and dedication. A development consultant once told me that in a major capital campaign, the 'wheels come off' about five or six times. The job of the consultant is to get the organization back on track and keep the vision alive. Anyone can quit. Anyone can be distracted. Anyone can flit from one idea to the next. The leader perceived as trustworthy and earns the trust of followers stays on course, shunning distractions and overcoming adversity.

When I was young I wondered about Colossians 1:11. It says, "...being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience." Who needs to be strengthened for endurance and patience? I wanted strength to lead well, accomplish great tasks, and overcome great challenges. With more years behind me, I realize that we can usually work up an adrenaline rush for the biggies; I need God's strength to keep me going when the projects are routine but necessary, dull but essential.

There is a place for leaders to employ wise, calculated redirection, but not just because they are distracted by something new that catches their eye or because obstacles block their way. Are there better methods available to accomplish the goals? Does new technology offer greater efficiency? Have unanticipated, negative consequences emerged? These are very real reasons to stop or redesign programs.

Every change of direction, however, creates questions in the minds of the followers. Unless addressed with care and thorough, clear communication, seeds of doubt will slowly undermine the follower's trust in the indecisive, drifting, inconsistent leader.

Stay the course. Build an environment of trust through uncompromising character, highly skilled competencies, and focused consistency. That is what prevails over life's distractions and roadblocks. A life of consistency will build the platform of trust needed for a graceful leader-follower dance.

